

UAB Search Firm Guidelines

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The goal of a successful search is to recruit the most qualified and diverse applicant pool available in order to select the best candidate to become a member of the UAB community. This guide has been created as a resource to assist departments when it is determined that the services of a search firm will be needed.

A search firm may be beneficial when...

- The search for qualified candidates is going to be difficult due to the unique job requirements, experience or credentials.
- The level of seniority or uniqueness of the position requires a nation-wide search.

This guide is meant to be used as a resource for those hiring a senior staff member and considering the assistance of a search firm. For information on using a search firm to hire a faculty member, please contact the Provost's office.

Section I: Organizing the Search

The Search Committee

1. If using a search committee, decide who will be on the committee. Be sure to include an affirmative action representative.
2. Review the charge to the search committee.
3. Identify tasks to be completed by the search committee chair.
4. Plan search committee meeting schedule.
5. Review committee expectations regarding confidentiality and attendance at meetings.
6. Identify an individual to handle notes, correspondence, travel arrangements and itinerary for candidates who visit the campus.
7. Develop budget, including travel expenses for committee/candidates.
8. Gain approval to use a search firm by a senior financial or administrative contact in your department.
9. Review expectation of the search firm regarding HR requirements, communications, and other expectations.
10. Make a search firm selection (see *Section III: How to Choose a Search Firm*).
11. Create the draft outline of the ideal position description and candidate profile. Creating the draft will help facilitate the process of selecting the type of firm best for the organization.

HR Process & Requirements

1. Complete a CRF process.
2. Talent Acquisition will contact the department to determine the intended recruitment process. The hiring department can choose to allow Talent Acquisition to recruit first and then engage the search firm, or the hiring department can choose to allow the firm to conduct the entire search.
3. Hiring manager should let the Talent Acquisition staff member know if they will be using a search firm.
4. Once search firm is identified, Talent Acquisition will contact the search firm to discuss recruitment process, EEO information requirements and applicant tracking.
5. HR Consultant will follow up with hiring department regularly so that HR is informed as to which hiring stage the department is in.
6. Position will be posted on UAB job listings website for a minimum of 3 days.
7. Resumes of qualified applicants received from UAB posting will be forwarded to search firm for tracking.
8. Search firm will submit candidate(s) resume(s) to hiring manager, or search committee chair, for review and will notify HR Consultant or staffing specialist.
9. The search firm will forward electronic copies of the interviewees' resumes to the staffing specialist.
10. Staffing specialist will upload resume(s) to Taleo and email application to candidate(s) to complete.
11. Hiring manager or search committee will make hiring selection and notify search firm, HR Consultant and staffing specialist.
12. Staffing specialist will begin background check process and will notify the hiring manager or search committee chair when results are returned.
13. The offer of employment will be made by the search firm.
14. Disposition form(s) will be completed by hiring department representative.
15. Offer form will be sent to hiring department by Talent Acquisition.
16. Talent Acquisition will generate UAB offer letter.
17. HR Consultant/staffing specialist will obtain EEO and applicant information from search firm.
18. Position will be closed in BrassRing.

Section II: The Role of the Search Firm

A search firm provides a wide range of recruiting activities including identifying core responsibilities and qualifications needed for a given role; writing job descriptions; developing a candidate pool; assessing how candidates' skills, experience, and personalities match the open position; conducting reference checks; and advising on the negotiation process between the organization and the final candidate.

The Functions of a Search Firm

1. **Identification of qualified candidates:** A search firm can develop an outreach strategy to identify candidates outside of an organization's common networks. This may include a strategy for placing advertisements, making phone calls and sending emails to uncover new candidates — even those potential candidates not actively job hunting.
2. **Coordinating interviews and notification to unsuccessful applicants.**
3. **Complete tasks within its area of expertise:** Many search firms will have a particular expertise that may be focused on a service area (e.g., higher education or healthcare), a budget size, or a function (e.g., executive directors, chief financial officers, chief operating officers, development directors, etc.).
4. **Act as an objective participant in the process:** Search firm consultants should identify issues as they arise.
5. **Free up valuable time of the search committee:** Search firms can create useful resume screening and interview tools to save time and create a better outcome.
6. **Maintain confidentiality:** Sometimes the nature of a search must be confidential in order to avoid publicity of a senior leader's departure. A search firm can conduct a search without sharing the name of the organization. The search firm is also responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the potential candidates.

Section III: How to Choose a Search Firm

Build a List of Potential Search Firms

Often, the first step in the process of selecting a search firm is to talk with colleagues and associates to identify the firms or individual consultants they have worked with in the past. While compiling the list, assess their experiences and ask questions about specific consultants as well as the firm. Typical questions for references may include...

- What kind of position were you seeking to fill?
- What impressed you the most about this firm/consultant?
- How did working with this firm compare to other experiences you have had using search firms?
- If the search committee drafted a job description prior to the search engagement, how did it differ from the original specification (i.e. what was the contribution of the search consultant)?
- Did you get quality candidates that you may not have gotten on your own?
- How well did the search consultant represent your organization to sources and candidates?
- How accessible was the search consultant?

Determine How the Firm Builds its Candidate Pool

The methodology used to access good candidate talent pools is a point of differentiation between firms. For example, if the position requires someone with specific business skills, the organization will want to understand how the search firm would build the candidate pool, if it has done this type of search before, and how successful it has been. In their assessment, the search committee will want to ask...

- Is this firm tapped into the networks needed for a successful outcome?
- Is the firm innovative in its approach in a way that will bring access to a talent pool that would otherwise not be accessible?
- Who will be working on the search? Will it be only one consultant or will there be a team assigned to build the pool, review resumes, and screen applicants?

Understand How the Search Firm is Paid

Search firm services typically require an organization to pay a fee that is one-third of the position's salary plus expenses related to the search. However, fees will vary and can often be negotiated depending on the firm's guidelines and type of service provided.

In a retained search, the organization commits to work with only that particular firm on the search. Some search firms will offer unbundled services. For example, an organization could hire a firm only for advice on formulating the job description, or developing a candidate pool. Terms of engagement with search firms are usually negotiable.

After gathering all relevant information, request references and proposals from your top choices and schedule a follow-up interview. A fully executed contract must be in place before the search begins. EEO information requirements and applicant tracking requirements should be included in the contract.

If the hiring manager prefers, UAB Human Resources can provide a short list of potential search firms.

What Should be Done Once a Search Firm Has Been Engaged?

Once a search firm has been chosen, there are steps that can help the recruiting process go smoothly...

- Identify communication methods. Set weekly phone and/or email update schedule with the search consultant to review any issues, receive feedback, and learn of progress.
- Establish clear roles for everyone involved in the recruitment process. For example, what will each person's responsibilities be? Who will be involved in resume reviews, short-list interviews, and final interviews?
- Explore who with the search firm should and should not be contacted. This will help protect relationships and networks as the firm works to build a candidate pool.
- To support UAB's commitment to affirmative action, remind the search firm of the contractual language as it relates to applicant tracking data and EEO requirements. It will benefit the hiring department to include the HR Consultant or a Talent Acquisition representative in the conversation with the search firm related to this subject.

Section IV: Interviewing the Candidates & Making a Selection

Steps to Consider While Developing Interview Agenda and Format

- Review interview process with all interviewers, including...
 - » Relevant information about the position (job description, essential functions of the job, necessary areas of inquiry)
 - » Responsibility to emphasize positive aspects of UAB
 - » Interview format and schedule; importance of consistency of questions for all candidates.
 - » Confidentiality expectations
 - » Rating sheets and timeline
 - » The interview process and campus visit
- Develop interview format to include...
 - » Welcome
 - » Questions to be asked of the candidate
 - » Questions from the candidate to the committee
 - » Current status of the search process
 - » Closing
- Schedule and reserve meeting spaces for interviews, and communicate to interviewers.
- Develop questions that relate to the position based upon job description.
- Develop interview rating sheet and distribute to all interviewers.
- Consider having each candidate perform relevant job skills during the interview (such as teach a class, make a presentation).
- Confirm interviews and campus visits with letters, including an information packet with the following: position title, department name, campus map, Birmingham map, roster of interviewing committee.
- Provide transportation to/from airport and hotel and someone to escort the candidate for interviews
- Conduct interviews.
- Collect and synthesize rating sheets for each candidate from all interviewers.
- Collect rating sheets and combine scores for each candidate from all interviewers; collect and review additional documentation such as reference checks and written materials related to the established criteria.
- When considering candidates who are comparably qualified, strongly regard affirmative action and diversity goals.
- Ensure that all committee opinions are expressed to search committee.

Campus Visit

The campus visit allows candidates to request meetings with particular individuals or university or local community groups. Ensure candidates are given equal opportunities to meet and interact with campus colleagues. Plan similar schedules for all candidates to ensure an equitable basis for evaluation.

Making the Offer

Negotiate compensation package within university guidelines. Send letter of offer reflecting the guidelines established by UAB Human Resources. Secure a signed letter from the selected candidate indicating acceptance of the position.

Documenting the Search

- Keep a summary of search committee meetings and a list of the committee members.
- Design form to track candidates at each step of the search process.
- Create and maintain a file for each interviewed applicant that include tracking form, correspondence, materials submitted, and documentation that pertains to each candidate.
- Ensure that documentation provides rationale for search committee decisions and recommendations.

Responsibilities of the Affirmative Action Representative

- Evaluate the search process on a continuing basis, keeping in mind the goals and principles of affirmative action and diversity as defined by the university in its values statement.
- Lead discussions with committee in identifying benefits of diversity and in developing a diverse pool that could lead to hiring a member of an underrepresented group for the department or administrative unit.
- Bring process gaps to the attention of the search committee and/or the chair for immediate action. Process gaps may include the following...
 - » Bias, prejudice or stereotyping in verbal or written communications, such as meetings, written correspondence, and interview questions
 - » Inadequate representation of underutilized groups in pool of candidates
 - » Bias, prejudice or stereotyping of candidates during evaluation period
- Review all search committee activities to ensure that differences are cultivated and respected and that fairness is the norm. These activities include...
 - » Developing job descriptions and minimum qualifications to cast the widest possible net
 - » Utilizing multiple creative recruitment methods
 - » Conducting interviews that are consistent and legal for all applicants
 - » Facilitating campus visits that provide similar opportunities for each candidate
 - » Developing a final group of candidates that, whenever possible, gives the opportunity to select from a diverse pool

Examples of Interview Questions

Interview questions are typically created based on the job related competencies and knowledge one needs to be successful in the position. Below are examples of general questions to consider.

- Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
- How do you handle a challenge? Give an example.
- Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?
- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- Describe a decision you made that was not popular and how you handled implementing it.
- Give an example of how you worked on team.
- Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or co-workers.
- Tell me about a time you had a conflict with someone within the organization.
- Tell me about a time you worked on a challenging team project.
- Do you prefer to work alone or with others?
- Tell me about a time you took a leadership role.
- What's the most difficult problem you had to solve?
- Tell me about a time when you had to implement change in your area of responsibility. How did you go about implementing them?
- Tell me about an accomplishment that you are very proud of and why it means so much to you.
- Describe a project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities. What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you use? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, why?
- What is the most difficult decision you've ever had to make at work? How did you arrive at your decision? What was the result?
- What is the toughest group that you have ever had to lead? What were the obstacles? How did you handle the situation?
- What has been your greatest leadership achievement in a professional environment? Talk through the steps you took to reach it.
- What have been the greatest obstacles you have faced in building/growing a team?

Inappropriate Interview Questions

Questions that are not job related should not be asked and are inappropriate during all phases of the search process. Examples include:

- Questions asked to one gender and not of the other.
- Questions about race, color, place of birth, national and family origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age or ancestry. However, you may ask about membership in job-related organizations or activities even if that also indicates or implies a person's protected group status.
- Questions about past, present or future marital status, pregnancy, family plans, or childcare issues. You may ask if applicant has any commitments that would preclude them from satisfying job schedules or performing job-related travel. Such questions must be asked of both sexes.
- Questions about the candidate's state of health. Questions about disabilities, and the time needed for treatment of the disabilities, unless this information is necessary to determine the candidate's ability to perform an essential job function without significant hazard.
- Questions about a foreign address that would indicate national origin. You may ask about the location and length of time of a candidate's current residence.
- Questions about a candidate's native-born or naturalized status. You may ask if the candidate is eligible to work in the U.S. if the question is asked of all candidates.
- Questions about a candidate's native tongue or how foreign language ability has been acquired. You may ask about foreign language skills if the position requires such ability.
- Questions about a candidate's willingness to work on religious holidays. You may ask about willingness to work a required schedule.
- Questions about whether a candidate has filed or threatened to file discrimination charges.
- Questions about military service and/or the candidate's type of discharge should not be asked. You may ask questions concerning service in the U.S. armed forces only if such service is a qualification for the position being sought.
- Questions about a candidate's credit rating or financial standing.
- Questions about the date a candidate graduated from school. You may ask number of years attended and degree(s) obtained.

UAB Hiring Resources

UAB Human Resources:
205-934-5321
uab.edu/humanresources

UAB Talent Acquisition:
205-934-5246

HR Hospital Consultants:
205-934-4681

UAB Hospital Recruiting:
205-934-4681

HR Campus Consultants:
205-934-4458
go.uab.edu/hrconsultants

UAB Policies & Procedures Library:
uab.edu/policies

You & UAB Handbook:
uab.edu/humanresources/home/policies/handbook

UAB Faculty Handbook:
uab.edu/policies/Pages/Faculty-Handbook.aspx